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Architecture as Environmentally Embedded Social and Material Justice

Abstract

This paper addresses the ethical good and the just in the environments we design and shape for our inhabitation principally from a virtue consideration (aretaic positions; Alasdair MacIntyre) of architecture (the designed built environment and design processes) and architects (designers of the built environment). Architecture's ethical attributes are briefly examined from four perspectives: 1) purposefulness (which is less about utility than it is about intent, motive, power relations, and civic purpose); 2) material production (which is more to do with labor sources and material origination to durability and sustainable design practices than construction per se); 3) aesthetics (beauty, image, meaning and human flourishing); and 4) practices (the dimension of relationships and conduct in the socio-political-economic context of landscape fabrication). The virtues of the architect from perspectives of the mastery and maintenance of architectural knowledge, creativity and ingenuity, the exercise of skill and judgment, and personal values and professional conduct. Three cases from practice: the design of prisons, the design and construction of a Social Services Clinic, and the selection of recyclable construction materials, test the preceding while considering the good and the just regarding environmental design and designing, which are explicit and embedded in the theme statement supporting "Design and Justice."

Disciplines

Architectural Engineering | Architectural Technology | Architecture | Environmental Design

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Architecture as Environmentally Embedded Social and Material Justice

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the *ethical good* and the *just* in the environments we design and shape for our inhabitation principally from a virtue consideration (aretaic positions; Alasdair MacIntyre) of architecture (the designed built environment and design processes) and architects (designers of the built environment). Architecture's ethical attributes are briefly examined from four perspectives: 1) purposefulness (which is less about utility than it is about intent, motive, power relations, and civic purpose); 2) material production (which is more to do with labor sources and material origination to durability and sustainable design practices than construction per se); 3) aesthetics (beauty, image, meaning and human flourishing); and 4) practices (the dimension of relationships and conduct in the socio-political-economic context of landscape fabrication). The virtues of the architect from perspectives of the mastery and maintenance of architectural knowledge, creativity and ingenuity, the exercise of skill and judgment, and personal values and professional conduct.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper explores threads that bind the complex realms of ethics, justice and architecture. Considerations of intent and duty are added to the central justice concerns of fairness, rights, equality and liberty as they may pertain to architecture. Neither the account of justice nor that of architecture is complete or perfected. However, sufficient definition of their intersection may help to illuminate facets of each. It is a beginning.

This article continues my exploration of architectural ethics (Wasserman, Sullivan, & Palermo, 2000; Palermo, 2001) – extending it to the consideration of the CJR theme challenge regarding justice as it pertains to design practices, the designer (architect), the designed and built environment (architecture and landscape), and their affects. It is written from the perspective of an educator and practicing architect – which is to say, from outside the general discourse on social and political justice. Its origins are in the field of applied ethics.

PERSPECTIVES ON JUSTICE

The field of justice studies being quite broad, with roots in ethics, political theory and law, a few comments on the justice perspective explored in this paper are in order. Justice considerations focus on the impacts that choices and actions stemming from ethical, social and political circumstances have on the community of participating and affected persons with respect to: equality, rights, fairness, and liberty. Fairness and equity may pertain to access to society's goods, and/or redistribution of privately held goods, or those held in common, to those who are in need or are least advantaged (Rawls, 1971); liberty to minimal interference in one's affairs, and the right to pursue personal interests, and, from a libertarian perspective, the unfettered retention of the fruits thereof (Nozick, 1974). Sometimes attempts are made to calculate the total good of the outcomes for the affected persons -- as in contemporary cost-benefit calculations, which have their roots in Utilitarianism (Bentham, 1789/1988; Mill, 1861/1987), for public design and construction projects such as city plans, highways and transportation systems and individual buildings.

A concise introduction to the multiplicity of justice perspectives can be found in the opening chapter of Whose Justice? Which Rationality? where Alasdair MacIntyre (1988) points out that there exists

“a set of conflicting conceptions of justice, conceptions which are strikingly at odds with one another. ... Some .. make the concept of desert central, while others deny it any relevance at all. Some .. appeal to inalienable human rights, others to some notion of social contract, others again to a standard of utility. .. [These theories also disagree] about the relationship of justice to other human goods, about the kind of equality which justice requires, about the range of transactions and persons to which considerations of justice are relevant, and whether or not a knowledge of justice is possible without a knowledge of God's law.” (p. 1)

and notes that:

“.. what many of us are educated into is, not a coherent way of thinking and judging, but one constructed out of an amalgam of social and cultural fragments inherited both from different

traditions from which our culture was originally derived (Puritan, Catholic, Jewish) and from different stages in and aspects of modernity (the French Enlightenment, the Scottish Enlightenment, nineteenth-century economic liberalism, twentieth-century political liberalism).” (p. 2)

MacIntyre moves on from here to articulate a history of Western justice concepts and the formulations of rationality upon which they rest.

Another synopsis of competing stratagems for social justice is articulated by S. Mulhall and A. Swift (1996, p. xvii):

“.. the communitarian critique [of liberalism] has concerned itself rather with these freedom-related aspects of liberalism than with its equality-related or distributive aspects. In terms of substantive political issues, what this means is that where the debate between redistributive liberals [Rawls, et al] and libertarians [Nozick, et al] centres on the justifiability of the welfare state and the taxation required to pay for it, that between the liberal and the communitarian [Sandel, MacIntyre, et al] concerns itself rather with the importance of the individual's right to choose her own way of life and to express herself freely, even where this conflicts with the values and commitments of the community of which she is a member.”

While each of the perspectives respects the autonomy of the individual with regard to integrity and safety of self, for the libertarian that autonomy and the right to liberty with minimal interference is primary; for the redistributive liberal account is taken of those who need assistance with the requisite that others provide the needed assistance; and for the communitarian social action occurs within a community of shared values and expectations -- necessarily tempering total autonomy.

Will Kymlicka (1990, p. 161) presents yet another synopsis of competing justice perspectives in this note regarding the Marxist critique of liberalism: “Where liberal egalitarian theories of justice try to employ private property while negating its inequalities, Marxists appeal to a more radical theory of justice that views private property as inherently unjust.” Among other scholars who define and explore competing theories of justice in a foundational manner are Archard (1996), Barry (1989), and Lebacqz

(1986). Also, there are good readers that introduce classic and contemporary materials on justice (e.g., LaFollette, 1997; Goodin and Pettit, 1997).

These debates at the theoretical limits of normative political theory are beyond the scope of this exploration. Here I shall limit myself to the more generally understood expectations of just social-political circumstances: those in which individuals have autonomy and integrity; in which each individual possesses certain rights to liberty and equality of treatment; and in which gross inequalities, transgressions, and access to and possession of life's goods are balanced with some measure of fairness.

ARCHITECTURE IS CONSTRUCTED **ETHICS -- DEMANDING JUST** **PERFORMANCE**

If there is one theme that I trust will pervade throughout it is this thought: Architecture is Constructed Ethics. Karsten Harries (1997, p. 4) proposes that the ethical function of architecture is the construction of ethos, making it a futures oriented enterprise. I concur, but I would add that the making of architecture is also an ethical enterprise that demands choice and decisions about "the right thing to do" with respect to designing and building our inhabited landscape. The landscape we inhabit, then, is also a constructed ethics. Moreover, it may be judged in terms of how well it meets the challenges of justice.

COULD BE AND OUGHT TO BE

When we first make conjectures about a change in the environment, we cast about for what could be, the potential for a good change. Specific design proposals define what ought to be, an ethical imperative of the right thing to do. This section contains premises regarding the shift from could to ought explored more fully in "Meditations on Quality" (Palermo, 2001).

Architecture (shaping the landscape we inhabit) is fundamentally a projection about a future state of affairs: what could be. The origination of architectural projects lay in some person, a committee, a board of directors, or a community of persons dreaming and conjecturing about the future: if I(we) were to build a new place (a church, an office building, a genetics research laboratory, a school, etc.)

then life would be better (worship would be more meaningful and inspired; the work and laboratory environment more commodious and supportive of productivity; learning would be enriched, etc.). We do not undertake architectural ventures to lower the quality of life. Making architecture, thereby positively influencing the quality of life, is about creating that beneficial situation toward which humanity strives: what ethicists refer to as the good. For any particular good outcome to in fact be good, one may evaluate it in terms of its justness with respect not only to those directly involved, but also to all those affected in some manner.

The ethical center of architecture is this: architecture does not belong to the architect. Architecture is about distilling the essence of what could be in the client's terms (however broadly client may be defined: for example, an individual including one's self; a corporation; residents in a community; the inhabitants and users of a place), and transforming it into architectural proposals. It is the essential act of discerning architecture's origins, purpose and impacts in a given circumstance. Such listening and understanding is more than a programming and design skill, is more than good business practice, it is an ethical mandate. Without it, architecture is an abstract formal exercise in search of a reason for being.

When conjecture about the environment moves to action to bring about a desired end, a shift happens. Intentions are defined more formally in terms of spaces and needs; desires and value expectations are more clearly articulated; budgets are developed; and site locations and contexts are defined, etc.: the architectural project is defined. The architect's contribution is this: explorations, analyses, inventions, and creation of specific design proposals that address the issues at hand. Form and image are made specific; how a place ought to be is definitively proposed. Functional objectives are resolved; structural, environmental conditioning and construction assemblies are designed; appearance beauty and image are determined; and all of this is subject to economic resource allocation. Out of an infinitude of possibilities, a singular, or at most a limited number of proposals are shaped. The architect's invention re-defines what could be, as what ought to be, an ethically constructed ethos.

In a design proposal, there are a particular set of relationships between landscape and building form, exterior form and interior space, the room and the object, image and meaning: these are physically, visually, and experientially particular. They are how it ought to be; the it being the place and the manner of inhabitation inseparably constructed. The architect has made an ethical determination of the best way to change the environment to support the better way of life that was the originating position of the project.

Architectural practice is a futures oriented process: designing and making decisions regarding the particular way that future state of affairs ought to be. No design decision, e.g., relation to context, form and space, functional resolution, aesthetic quality, material fabrication, is neutral. The architect needs to understand the experiential implications of design proposals. They are all culturally connected; they are all consequential for the present day life and into the future. In Winston Churchill's terms: "We shape our buildings, and afterwards, they shape us!" (Churchill, 1943). The shift from what could be to what ought to be is an ethical shift; it is a shift that requires just performance.

ARCHITECTURE'S ESSENTIALLY ETHICAL CONDITION

As noted in the preceding section, architecture in its broadest sense can be conceptualized as the practices of thinking about, designing and constructing humankind's places of present and future inhabitation. Those places include buildings, urban and rural landscapes, and interiors. They utilize natural and economic resources, shelter us from the elements, frame spaces for various uses, and symbolize our institutions. The practice of architecture includes immersion into all facets of the discipline from history and theory, tectonics, and design, to the social-political-professional-craft process of bringing built-form about. This section builds upon the five "Ethical Lenses" proposed in Ethics and the Practice of Architecture (Wasserman, et al, 2000, 80-91), through which to examine the essentially ethical nature of architecture. Setting aside "Aesthetics," and "Ideological Position," three are explored here. Discussion of them is extended to address certain

concerns of justice that emerge in the case studies that follow:

1. Purposefulness. Architecture is grounded in human intention and purpose. It is therefore subject, as are other human affairs, to judgment with respect to its intentions and outcomes: who and what purposes are served by those intentions, how well those intentions are met. These are not only practical or utilitarian judgments, but also ethical. For example, intentions and purposes may be beneficial or good (a day care center) or harmful or evil (a genocide machine). A project may serve an economically disadvantaged community (a community-based sweat-equity housing project), or it may contribute to suburban sprawl (a urban fringe strip-mall). They may serve the interests of despots, dictators, military juntas, or democracies; they may serve the interests of powerful individuals against or for the public interest; and they may displace or marginalize the weak, or the discriminated against (ghettos still exist). Ethical judgment needs to be reached in evaluating architectural project intentions and purposes.

Beyond origination intents and purposes, judgment of how well those are met through proposed architectural solutions is another measure of relative merit or goodness of the built result -- 'goodness', in this sense, being the ethical virtue of the work: how well it satisfies its intended purposes. Issues of purpose are central to Case #1 and the first part of Case #2.

2. Material Production. Architecture is a material production (1). The built inhabited landscape tends to be large and demands many resources for its accomplishment. Once having been built, even ephemeral portable architecture such as teepee's or yurts have a physical and enduring presence, even if only for a short period of time at any one place. Material production uses natural resources either held or needed in common. Those resources may be used well or wastefully (more than one society has made itself extinct due to desertification of its locale). With the growth in global population and standard of living expectations, sustainable practices of resource use and settlement patterns is almost an ethical imperative. Material production is the central element of the arguments in Case #3.

3. Praxis. *Praxis* is used here to highlight the total *array of practices* that making architecture requires, and to break the implied 'business' or 'professional' limitations often associated with *practice*. Praxis focuses us on thoughtful action arising from the knowledge of a discipline. In addition to its being the built landscape, architecture is a practice, or a collection of practices, an art. The *virtue of practice* is here used in the sense that the contemporary philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has recaptured from Aristotle: that of the virtuous practice of a discipline which defines its content, quality and ends, and which therefore can be judged regarding its ethical merit (MacIntyre, 1984). This applies to both the activities of practicing and the resultant works of practice. All three cases demand the exercise of professional knowledge and judgment through the practices of the discipline.

Through these three lenses (and the two that were not discussed), the embedded ethics within many seemingly everyday events in architectural practices may be assessed. It is important to assert the case for the engaged ethical practice of architecture because there are not a few who view the vicissitudes of practicing with a cynical eye. In a widely heralded collection of "the most important essays on architectural theory at the close of the 20th century" (Hays, 1998), Robin Evans (1998/1982) offers these thoughts in a positive review of an exhibition of drawings by Daniel Libeskind:

"The architect can travel light. His work does not now involve him in the tedious entropy of getting something built, nor in the dubious politics of improving social conditions, nor in the appalling sycophancy of client sucking, nor in reconstructing his personality to fit his job. ... Libeskind....by cutting out the aspects of architecture that are brimful of meaning -- its all too vivid meaning as a social, economic and political process of construction -- ... allows for the construction of lines in the sky."

Libeskind's Chamber Works are mesmerizing drawings of great beauty. What is rueful is Evans' derisive language of indictment regarding the essences of architecture in the making that are contended here to be its essential condition to be architecture, and from whence it gains its ethical and justice import.

SUMMARY PROPOSITION

The making of architecture is an ethical event; the architecture made, constructed ethics! Because of architecture's inherent publicness, its reliance on common resources, and its impacts on all persons -- its social-political-legal-economic origination and result -- it is also an event that demands just performance.

CASE STUDIES

Three cases from practice: the choice to design prisons, the design and construction of a Social Services Clinic, and the specification of recyclable construction materials, test the preceding while considering the good and the just regarding environmental design and designing, which are both explicit and embedded in the CJR theme statement.

A PRISON FACILITY CASE: TO DESIGN OR NOT TO DESIGN

Award-winning and well-published architecture and engineering firm ABC has about 65 people on staff. The firm has specialty design capabilities in corporate headquarters, research centers, K-12 schools, university facilities, historic preservation, and justice facilities including detention and prison facilities of all sorts.

A Senior Associate and principal designer informed the Principals of the firm that he did not wish to, and would not, work on detention and prison facilities projects if asked. He said: "I became an architect to work on projects that represent the best of human aspirations, not the worst. I find prisons themselves and the approach taken to them as commodity space with our large governmental clients to be lacking in that positive aspiration. They are negative warehouses for people."

The firm assured him, that even though they disagreed with his reasoning and position, and while justice facilities were a major part of the firm's consulting work, that he would not be asked to work on those types of projects. The firm has enough talented senior staff to rearrange assignments.

This case, originating in a liberal, democratic, open market society, contains multiple ethical dimensions. Among them: 1) the ethical intents that inhere in particular project types, i.e., in the architecture itself; 2) the "right" of an employee in a free-market society to decline to perform certain types of work for their employer; 3) the impact on the firm that would result from

all members of the firm exercising a “right of choice” with respect to work tasks; 4) the impact on other firm members as a result of the special consideration given to this one employee, e.g., who does design prison facilities then?; and 5) the concept of paternalism in corporate leadership that enables choice.

While this case begins with the consideration of justice facilities and prisons as its focus, the questions of justice that arise are related less to the technical design, and business and professional ethics of such projects and their fitness to purpose, than to their aspirations and social-political role. Is it the case, as asserted by the Senior Associate, that justice facilities, as opposed to religious centers or universities, arise in the negative side of human intention? Whether they are part of a criminal justice system arising from deterrence (punishment severe enough to deter crime), deserts/punishment (progressively severe punishment befitting crimes), a rehabilitative (rehabilitating the criminal so that he or she can return to productive society), or restorative (taking into account restitution to those harmed) position, prisons are physical architectural manifestations of the social-political consideration of isolating the relatively few who are guilty of criminal transgression against society, from the many who are law-abiding. Certain prison designs, such as Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, analyzed by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1979), and H.H. Richardson’s Allegheny County Jail in Pittsburgh, the set for many films, are historically important architectural designs. Other prisons such as the Tower in London, or the Bastille in Paris, however infamous, are also famous -- they capture the imagination about a time, place.

Is it a matter of business, personal or professional ethics for an architect, who, unlike ordinary business people in a free-market society, is licensed by the state to protect the public health, safety, and welfare to withhold design services from a socially sanctioned project? What if all architects decided to not design prisons, thereby causing others with fewer skills to design and build them (for they would be built)--quite possibly resulting in less secure and less humane designs? What if the socially sanctioned purpose were a more generally acknowledged “unjust” project such as a gas chamber? Does type matter? Are these decisions sliding along some scale? Are the decisions to be based upon rights, e.g., of the many for the right to peace of mind, with the architect therefore incurring a duty to society to design a secure prison so that the populace may find that peace? Upon teleological outcomes, e.g., for the few to receive just due, with the architect therefore incurring a duty to design a humane, but, nonetheless, a penal facility? Of

contractarian order as the result of a social compact to allow/require prisons, with the architect as a citizen of the compact therefore incurring a duty to design prisons to serve society’s objectives?

As with most case studies, the intent is not to resolve and prove a positive path through the case, but to raise essential questions that may shed some light on the issues embedded in the case, in turn, instigating reflection and debate regarding the case. The focus here has been on perhaps two issues: 1) Does the architect, who is specially licensed by the contemporary state to bear the title and practice based upon specialized expertise, owe a duty to the granting society to exercise and provide that expertise for its projects? Is the relationship between certain professions and society commutative? (Consider the public defender system; emergency medical care.); 2) If a social project is just in its origin, are the principles of a professional’s liberty to choose to participate and society’s rights to humane environments foundational or circumstantial and consequential? For surely as a practical matter, at least some architects would choose to design prisons, even if one or a few do not? Yet, liberty for one to defer is liberty for all to defer.

The architect’s request and the firm’s decision seem to be a benignly resolved private marketplace situation. But, the request begs larger questions of the relationship between licensed professionals and their duties to the society that grants them monopoly control of their expertise; and it entails a judgment regarding the aspirations and justness of societal enterprises that requires validation.

SOCIAL SERVICES CLINIC CASE Pt. 1: PROCESS, APPROVALS AND CONSTRUCTION:

A Social Service Center (SSC) located in a 30,000 person city that is part of a 250,000 population metropolitan area undertook to design and build a new clinic. At the clinic, the SSC intended to offer its full array of family planning counseling and information services, as well as pre-natal medical services and, in appropriate cases, elective abortions.

Within a 150 mile radius of the city, an area with a population of nearly a million people that included parts of three states, there were literally dozens of architectural firms with the qualifications to design the clinic. None responded to the advertisement for design services. After calling several firms noted for their medical clinic design practices, SSC representatives discovered: 1) some firms did not respond because the leadership of the firm did not approve of abortions; 2) other firms

did not respond because while the firm had no reservations about abortions, many of their clients did, and they could not risk the loss of business.

Eventually a well-qualified woman-owned design firm in a large city 250 miles distant in a fourth state accepted the commission and carried out the design work.

Bidding and constructing the project met with similar resistance, for a mix of similar reasons. No general contractors in the immediate vicinity nor in the expanded 150 mile radius would bid the project. Eventually, a construction contract was negotiated with a general contractor in a city 170 miles distant. Twenty-eight regional masonry contractors declined to bid on the project. The 29th, the sole bidder, got the subcontract for masonry.

The need for these types of business concerns, beyond sensationalized national cases, was reinforced locally by anonymous hate mail, phone threats, and mailed packages with “baby’s coffins” that the contractor, the architect and the SSC director all received. In the case of the architect, the local bomb squad was called in to open the plain brown box. No culprits were ever identified.

During the design phase, planning and zoning approval, building permitting, and medical facility certification (state governmental permit), the SSC was consistently denied approvals, or requested to meet extraordinary requirements by elected or appointed public officials. During the five years it took to complete the project, the SSC pursued the denials in five different lawsuits, all of which it won: the denials were not substantive as a matter of law according to the courts. The denials had taken the appointed and elected representatives “off the hook” with respect to local community mores.

To outside interested parties, one person’s social services clinic is another person’s abortion factory. Unlike most of the other medical clinics in the metropolitan area, this SSC clinic would perform abortions upon request. There can be no doubt that one of the primary (and inflammatory) ethical/justice debates of the last quarter-century in America has been over a woman’s right to make choices with respect to herself and her body, and the proposition that all life is sacred and demanding of protection, including the life of a fetus that cannot live outside its mother’s womb. Architecture is a part of both systems of thought. Family planning, medical advising, and pre-natal healthcare all occur someplace: that someplace is a building: architecture. Legal abortions likewise take place in buildings: architecture.

It is not the place of this paper to debate the merits of either position, except as the conflict over the architectural project became a matter of justice.

Throughout the US, family planning services, medical care including pre-natal care, and abortions performed upon demand are legal. The right for women to make the choice to have an abortion is protected under the Constitution according to *Roe v. Wade*. The services of the SSC are indisputably legal. Moreover, because the SSC is underwritten by private resources, it is virtually the only source of access to such services for a significant number of economically disadvantaged women. The majority of women served by this particular SSC had limited economic means. Several key concepts in justice are a part of this scenario: 1) definition of a societal good (medical services and abortions); 2) access to society’s goods; 3) assistance with access for the least advantaged (the women without economic resources); 4) the right to security in the integrity of person (choice for the mother; protection for the fetus), and 5) the conflict between what is legal and what some may view and moral or immoral with respect to what is legal.

What comes into play in this case is a) moral principle: the principles of those who disagree with the SSC’s legal social and medical mission and who choose to not participate in the project based upon their personal beliefs; b) raw power: that of intimidation and retaliation against those who agree with the SSC’s mission, and that of political influence with appointed and elected officials; and c) contravention of the social contract that has found the mission of the SSC to be acceptable, and the contravention of the rights of access of disadvantaged persons to social services. The resultant impacts delayed the project, and provoked “legal” and “redtape” roadblocks by agencies in authority that were eventually all dismissed by the courts.

Beyond these design and construction process events, there were a number of specific design accommodations made to protect the users of the clinic and to provide an experientially positive environment:

SOCIAL SERVICES CLINIC CASE Pt. 2: DESIGN AND MATERIAL CHOICES:

The SSC clinic originally had a budget of \$750,000 based upon the renovation of an existing building in the downtown area of the city, making use of nearby public parking and public transit. After meeting public and political resistance the SSC purchased a suburban site in a Planned Unit Development that already had several other medical and hospital clinics in it. This site was only accessible

by automobile, and required designs and expenditure for on-site parking and perimeter security.

Final design plans had the following features built in: 1) the public street side had a masonry wall to above eye-height – interior spaces on that side of the building were lit by clerestory windows; 2) glass on the entry side of the building was reflective so that outsiders could not see in; 3) a \$100,000 security system was installed; 4) a special 4-hour fire protected records vault was constructed; 5) the site had a separate doctor's driveway and secured entrance; 6) within the perimeter of the building envelope, two exterior atrium type courtyards were constructed so that staff and patients could "step outside" without public interference; 7) the palette of exterior building materials was restricted to those that could be "graffiti-proofed"; 8) all exterior design items such as signs were designed to be vandal-proof.

The project at the new location cost over \$2,000,000.

As a result of the conflict between the protected rights of the SSC, and community condemnation based upon a differently based universal principle of the sanctity of all life, the project was not only delayed, but ended up being relocated to a less advantageous location for the SSC's clients, subjected to many unanticipated design demands, and cost nearly three times the original budget.

Since the SSC existed in the city before the construction of the clinic, and has existed comfortably in the community since its construction, it is the social-political-economic process of the architectural project that became the lightning-rod for community grievance over SSC and its mission. The community was enjoined in a debate over the nature of local community values, national constitutional rights, and the issue of life itself regarding the outcomes of the project. It was the architectural event that raised multiple issues of justice:

- Is it justifiable for a licensed professional to withhold professional services because they personally disagree with the intentions that a project will serve? Are there limits in either direction?
- Is it justifiable in a democratic free market for some to threaten to withhold votes or to withhold economic contracts from those who would work with a third party with whom the group disagrees? Would your perspective change with respect to acts of conscience if it were your enterprise and you personally that were being intimidated?
- Is it justifiable to design a humane environment such as one with gardens and special security

qualities to support what many would hold are inhumane activities, even if they are legal?

- In what manner do rights accrue, and how inviolate are rights?
- When systems of justice based upon different concepts come into conflict, i.e., rights of adults versus a priori values about unborn fetuses, how is the dispute to be resolved?
- When protagonists such as the SSC and the larger community do battle, who is protecting the interests of the most affected group: the women and families seeking SSC's services? Is it justifiable to deny them access to needed services and care?

All architectural projects require that choices be made. Those choices are not value free. Both the ethical and the just are encompassed in architectural works. We are inured to them because the art and design of architecture, and its pursuit as a business occlude these other dimensions.

SPECIFYING RECYCLABLE CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS CASE:

Aluminum is a mainstay of contemporary construction systems. It is used for surface panels, glazing systems, curtain wall and storefront systems, etc. It is light, workable, does not rust, holds sharp definition formally.

It is also extremely resource intensive to extract and refine in production. Mining often takes place in "invisible" parts of the world: 59% of the mined bauxite ore originates in western Australia, central Brazil, and Guinea, and none of the world's top ten producers are in North America. Then of course, it is milled into final usable forms. In the manner that aluminum cans can be recycled, certain aluminum building products, which are a bit more first-cost intensive, are also recyclable.

In our contemporary global economy, how is the use of single-use disposable, as opposed to recyclable, construction materials justified? Are there ethical/justice implications inherent in basic construction materials?

Everyday, all over the world, architects sit down to select and specify building materials, building systems, and their attendant labor systems for projects as diverse as back-porch additions and Olympic stadiums. Is it too onerous a thought to burden these parochial and local choices conceived and perceived as pertaining to appearance, durability, cost and constructability with the weight of justice? In what way do these architectural choices pertain to justice?

There are those who pursue the issue of the ethical standing of the environment, *per se*. Here we may assert that even considering ecosystem earth as a productive source to support human endeavors with no ethical standing, there is at least one matter of ethical consequentialist concern: if we deplete earth, what is next for humankind? A StarTrek-like existence in starships in search of a new world? A hope (wish?) that technological advances will keep us ahead of depletion? Consider that it is the general public, not architects, who pushed for, and passed, environmental legislation in the US and Europe.

One of the technological systems that we have mastered is the extraction, production, use, and recycling of various earth resources, including those that go into buildings. As a matter of logic, it would seem that given the numbers of people on earth, the inequities of access to goods and life quality that need to be addressed, the rates of use of resources, that we ought to at least recycle materials when possible. Can doing otherwise be justified?

Matters of international economic justice, environmental justice, and global inequalities with respect to access to life's goods are major areas of discourse. Many products being used in the richest third of the world (the largest refiner of bauxite into aluminum is the US), originate in less developed nations. They are part of those nations' national product. Without turning this into a geo-political debate regarding the WTO, clearly, building products and enterprises are part of such globally connected markets. Indeed, though, banking systems and financing in the developed world favor "least first cost" and secure investment systems: a rate of return on investment is needed. The difficulty is that the rate of return and the investment in architectural projects, both private and public, are often drawn too narrowly: at the limit of the immediate open-market transaction at hand.

If contracting entities have reached what each considers to be legal, fair exchanges (the libertarian criterion for valid acquisition) -- has justice been served? Even if one or both parties operates in a political landscape without environmental protection laws, or labor rights laws (conditions which may affect the liberal point of view)? Depletions of global resources, inequities in global labor rates, befouling the environment (in places conveniently out of sight from North America), rather than being ameliorated are often being exacerbated. Witness the Texaco TV advertisement (shown regularly during the winter of 2000) that shows geologists hugging and tasting rocks at the most pristine of wilderness sites searching for oil and then pans away from the wilderness

to speak optimistically about finding the energy to meet society's needs. One can alternatively tune in to CBS 60 Minutes to see an exposé on the degradation caused by Texaco's pipelines and production facilities in the Andes and Amazon.

This may seem to play fast and loose with generally acknowledged "hidden" environmental costs. Nonetheless, landscape construction (civil and architectural) is among the US's largest industries. From within architecture, sustainable environmental design practices such as: reusing and recycling buildings and

building materials, designing buildings for more efficient use of energy, making them more energy neutral, proposing urban development patterns that are less infrastructure intensive, etc., are strategies that we currently have available while not decreasing living standards and choice. They affect non-renewable resources, renewable resources, environmental impacts, labor expenditure and international exchanges. With the possibility of specifying recyclable materials as a matter of architectural choice, is it just not too? Who would you define as the affected parties with respect to the ethics and justice of the social-political-legal-economic process of architectural realization?

SUMMARY: EMBEDDED ETHICS AND JUST RESULTS

Rippling throughout the practices of architecture are processes and decisions that involve ethical choices with respect to the landscape we shape and inhabit. Those choices are concerned with social intent and purpose, private and public rights of access, use of global resources, fabrication and construction labor, economic exchange, etc. Each design professional, in each design choice, is proposing a better world – one that intrinsically improves the human condition. The built result not only entails ethical origination, but has implications for justice as well – for architecture is a large-scale public enterprise affected by, and affecting, many individuals as well as whole communities. In the global situation of contemporary architecture, those communities are often regional and international as well as local. Specific professional, legal and contractual concerns are less the issue than the larger systemic social-political-ethical ones that originate in what is a necessarily collective action. Each built work can be understood and evaluated as a manifestation of equity, access, and distribution, supportive of particular rights and fairness.

Given that architecture originates in thought, the range of thought incorporated must move beyond

commonly understood functional and aesthetic considerations to those of ethics and justice.



NOTES

1. Stating that architecture is material production does not deny the critical power of architectural thought and speculation. It is only that such speculation in drawing, text, modeling, film and other media and virtual reality simulation is architectural -- of architecture -- and a stimulation to imagination, but it is not architecture.

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